

First I would like to thank this committee for the opportunity to give testimony on this important safety issue.

Briefly, the HCC Police Department has four sworn, POST-certified officers. POST stands for Police Officer Standards and Training, and it is the minimum educational requirement set by the State of Connecticut for its law enforcement officers. This means that these four individuals have the same training and abilities as any sworn officer on any Connecticut municipal police force.

Police officers at the Connecticut State Universities and UConn are armed; the officers at Housatonic Community College are not, yet they are doing the job of a police officer. HCC serves a population that is close in size to the state universities. We are an open campus which serves approximately 6000 students annually. HCC is a living museum with approximately twenty five million dollars' worth of art on campus. We also sponsor high school partnership programs with many high school students on campus daily, and we have an Early Childhood program with over thirty 3 and 4 year olds on campus daily. This adds to the complexity of maintaining a safe and secure campus.

HCC Police Officers receive authority from Connecticut General Statute 29-18, which covers "special policemen for state property." The statute gives individual authority to each police officer at a community college campus, but does not establish a recognized police force, nor does it offer the protections that we are seeking.

The HCC Police Officers are asking that our sworn POST-certified officers be awarded the same protections afforded our colleagues at the Connecticut State Universities and UConn. SB 1013 would make HCC Police a recognized department, and allow us equal authority to that exercised by the police departments at the state's other public institutions of higher learning.

One final note; It is not anticipated that arming our officers will increase cost to the college. The officers are currently required to maintain their POST certification which requires yearly firearms re-certification.

Thank you for your time, and for your consideration of this bill.